Impact of Textbook-Based Input on L2 Learners' Pragmatic Comprehension

Mehdi Ruhi Athar
Department of English Language and Literature
Farhangian University
Varzesh Street, Hamedan, I. R. Iran

Abstract

Most studies on interlanguage pragmatics have been confined to the production aspect of L2 learners' pragmatic development, losing sight of pragmatic comprehension and its relationship with listening comprehension and textbook-based pragmatic input. The present study aimed to fill the gap by investigating the relationship between the type of input provided by textbooks and L2 learners' linguistic and pragmatic comprehension. It adopted a listening instrument that measured pragmatic comprehension and linguistic comprehension. Learners' pragmatic and linguistic comprehension was compared across four groups of male and female advanced students with different textbook backgrounds. The results of ANOVAs and the follow-up Scheffe tests revealed significant differences among the groups in terms of pragmatic comprehension (PC) and linguistic comprehension (LC). In addition, Pearson correlation results suggested that the relationship between PC and LC subtasks in the two groups was not statistically meaningful and, accordingly, indicated construct differences between linguistic and pragmatic comprehension.

Keywords: Interlanguage Pragmatics, Pragmatic Comprehension, Textbook-Based Input

1. Introduction

As an underdeveloped area, Interlanguage Pragmatics (IPL) deals with the study of non-native speakers' acquisition, comprehension and production of pragmatics. Within ILP development, however, research has been dominated by production-oriented studies and comprehension is the least well represented, with only a handful of studies done to date. The major themes followed by these studies are the relationship between the comprehension of implied meaning among adult L2 learners and certain social and psychological variables, including the learners' proficiency level, language contact with speakers of the target language, comprehension speed and accuracy as well as the differences or growth with reference to corresponding processing mode and strategies used by these learners. Nevertheless, an area which has received no attention at all is the comprehension of speakers' attitudes which is influenced by the interlocutors' relationship, the situation, the interlocutors' mood and the topic.

Accordingly, the present study aims to fill the gap by focusing on the relationship between the learners' textbook background as the source of language input and their development of linguistic and pragmatic comprehension operationalized in their performance in a listening comprehension task.

2. Background

2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics: Pragmatic Comprehension

As a domain within second language studies, pragmatics is usually referred to as interlanguage pragmatics. Roughly but adequately for the purpose, Kasper and Rose (2002) distinguish two sections within the wider domain of interlanguage pragmatics. As the study of SL use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language. From cognitive-psychological and social- psychological perspectives, interlanguage pragmatics research has investigated how the process of becoming pragmatically competent in second or foreign language is influenced by such factors as input, noticing and understanding L2 proficiency, transfer and individual differences (Kasper and Roever, 2005).

Pragmatic comprehension refers to the comprehension of oral language in terms of pragmatic meanings. English language learners, as Garcia (2004) put it, need to be able to comprehend meaning pragmatically in order to:

- understand a speaker's intentions
- interpret a speaker's feelings and attitudes
- differentiate speech act meaning
- evaluate the intensity of a speaker's meaning
- recognize sarcasm, joking and other facetious behaviour
- be able to respond appropriately

This kind of comprehension involves both speech act, i.e. the speaker's endeavor to do something or get the hearer to do something (Searle, 1969), and conversational implicature, i.e. the speaker's expression of attitudes and feelings using indirect utterances that must be inferred by the hearer (Grice, 1975). In other words, pragmatic comprehension comprises the integration of information from a wide range of linguistic sources (e.g. phonetic, syntactic and semantic) to comprehend a contextually appropriate utterance that reveals a speaker's intentions and attitudes. However, the difference between these kinds of comprehension is that the comprehension of speech acts requires the hearer to understand the illocutionary force and respond to it, while the comprehension of conversational implicatures involves the hearer's ability to recognize what the speaker thinks and to infer the speaker's attitudes and feelings.

In his theory of pragmatic comprehension, Van Dijk (1977, cited in Garcia, 2004) considers this comprehension as a two-dimensional process: context analysis and utterance analysis. In context analysis, language users analyze the meaning of an utterance based on the context in which it was uttered by using background knowledge, past experiences, and knowledge of social rules. They also apply their own expectations of plausible goals of the speaker and expectation of the kinds of utterances that are likely to take place in that particular context. They decide which information to focus attention on, such as the location of an interaction rather than the hair color of the speaker. This attention to relevant elements has been referred to as "salience" by Verschueren (1999).

Context analysis provides only a part of the information used to comprehend pragmatically; comprehension must finally be based on an analysis of the utterance itself. In utterance analysis, language users analyze semantic (e.g. speech parts, modality), syntactic (e.g. sentence forms, word order), lexical (e.g. word choice, fixed phrases), phonological (e.g. intonation, stress), and paralinguistic (e.g. gesticulation, facial expressions) information to interpret the meaning of an utterance.

These same linguistic and paralinguistic elements can be applied to linguistic comprehension (Flowerdew, 1994; Lynch, 1998; Rost, 2002), which leads to the question: What is the difference between linguistic comprehension and pragmatic comprehension? The difference lies in the application of context analysis, following Van Dijik's (1977) model. Although the two types of comprehension involve the same linguistic elements, pragmatic comprehension involves an added dimension, namely context analysis.

Within the L2 developmental pragmatics literature, a very small number of studies have focused on pragmatic comprehension. These studies have examined pragmatic comprehension under a variety of labels: comprehension of (a) speech acts, (b) conversational implicatures, (c) routines, (d) indirect utterances, and (e) implied speaker's intentions. In retrospect, we can discern three phases in these themes, during which there has been a shift in the theoretical grounding from Gricean implicature to psycholinguistic processing models. In terms of instrumentation, we register a movement from written to spoken stimuli, and from untimed to timed responses.

These studies have addressed a range of issues, including the proficiency effect on pragmatic comprehension. (Cook and Liddicoat, 2002, Garcia, 2004; Koike, 1996; Rover, 2005; Taguchi, 2005, 2007), the development of pragmatic comprehension (Bouton, 1992, 1994; Taguchi, 2007, 2008a), the effect of learning context on pragmatic comprehension (Taguchi, 2008a), the effect of different implicature types on comprehension (Carrell, 1984; Cook &Liddicoat, Garcia, Koike, Taguchi, 2002, 2005, 2007), the comprehension speed of indirect utterances (Holtgraves, 2007; Takahashi and Roitblat, 1994; Taguchi, 2005, 2007, 2008a,2008b), the relationship between pragmatic comprehension and production (Roever, 2008), and the separation of pragmatic processing skills from linguistic comprehension skills for native English speakers (Clark, 1991; Colombo, 1993, Gibbs, 1999, Gibbs and Moise, 1997; Holtgraves, 1999).

With reference to the findings, there is a complex interplay among types of implied meaning, general L2/FL proficiency, and pragmatic comprehension. Some of these general results can be listed as the following:

1. The relationship between conventionality and proficiency in pragmatic comprehension
2. The effect of L1 background on comprehension

3. The interaction between grammar and pragmatics

4. A possible developmental sequence in the understanding of implicatures

5. Lack of significant correlation between proficiency and the ability to interpret implicature correctly

6. Developmental patterns in form-function mappings

7. Separate developmental paths for speed and accuracy in L2 pragmatic comprehension

8. Interrelationship between proficiency and the ability to interpret relevance and formulaic implicatures

9. Differences in the processing of pragmatic meaning compared to linguistic meaning.

Since the 1980s, both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on ILP have explored the variables that affect production and acquisition including social affective factors (Schumann 1978), grammar (Walters 1980), pragmatic transfer (Olshtain 1983), length of residence, time spent studying abroad and duration of language contact (e.g., Schmidt 1983; Bouton 1992, 1994, 1999; Achiba 2003). However, pragmatic comprehension is rather underrepresented in the literature.

The most recent studies on ILP and comprehension focus on adult L2 learners, and specifically on testing their ability to interpret the interlocutor's intention and implied meaning of face-threatening acts such as conventional and non-conventional requests or refusals (e.g., Carrell 1982; Cook and Liddicoat 2002; Taguchi 2008b) or their comprehension accuracy and speed over a designated period in a cross-sectional experiment according to their proficiency levels (e.g., Cook and Liddicoat 2002; Taguchi 2005). In such studies, researchers invite learners to role play or answer listening questions according to their proficiency levels (Kasper 1984; Cook and Liddicoat 2002; Yamanaka 2003; Taguchi 2005), compare their comprehension results and speed with native English speakers (Holtgraves 2007), or re-test the development of their comprehension ability over a certain interval or after a period of language contact (Bouton 1992, 1994, 1999; Taguchi 2007, 2008a, 2008b). These studies find that accuracy rate and processing speed vary with L2 learners' proficiency level, length of residence and language contact. High-proficiency L2 learners are generally more able to interpret implied meaning than low-proficiency L2 learners. The comprehension performance of the former is sometimes on a par with or as accurate as that of native speakers (Taguchi 2002). On the other hand, the comprehension performance of the latter is usually lower than that of native speakers (Yamanaka 2003).

Language contact and exposure may help L2 learners to better comprehend conversational implicatures except those which are culture-specific (Bouton 1994, 1999), and improve comprehension speed but not accuracy in comprehending indirect opinion (Taguchi 2008a). In other words, there is no guarantee for an overall improvement in the comprehension of implied meaning. Taguchi (2002) identifies five adult English learners' reception strategies, that is, paralinguistic cues, the adjacency pair rule, background knowledge and experience, keyword inferencing, logical reasoning and speaker intention. She also found that low- and high-proficiency adult learners of English adopted different inferential strategies. The low-proficiency group used more keyword inferencing and background experience, whereas the high-proficiency group attended more to paralinguistic cues, the adjacency pair rule and speaker intention. Researchers have explained the performance of adult learners from different perspectives, including the frame-theoretical approach (Kasper 1984), language-processing model (Bialystok 1991) and relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995).

However, the research literature on the learners' pragmatic comprehension regarding speakers' attitudes (e.g. tentativeness, directness, politeness, formality) is surprisingly scant.

3. Purpose of the Study

Results of many studies strongly suggest that most aspects of L2 pragmatics are indeed teachable, that instructional intervention is more beneficial than no instruction specifically targeted on pragmatics, and that for the most part, explicit instruction combined with ample practice opportunities results in the greatest gains. However, research has rarely been directed toward the impact of L2 learners' textbook background on the comprehension of the speaker's attitudes and communicative keys as two elements of pragmatic competence. To address this issue, the present study aims to focus on the comprehension of three basic speech acts (i.e. greeting and introductions, personal interests, and likes and dislikes) and the speaker's attitudes (i.e. the choice of a way of saying something which expresses our view appropriately, i.e. showing that we are being <polite>, <informal>, <tentative> and so on). The questions raised in the present study were as follows:

    1. Do learners with different textbook backgrounds differ in their linguistic comprehension of L2 input?

    2. Do learners with different textbook backgrounds differ in their pragmatic comprehension of L2 input?

3. Does the linguistic comprehension of learners with different textbook backgrounds differ from their pragmatic comprehension of L2 input?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

In order to answer the research questions, concerning the relationship between the independent variable of textbooks and the dependent variables of linguistic and pragmatic comprehension, 75 male and female EFL learners from different language institutes and universities were chosen to meet the need to select subjects from different textbook backgrounds. They were studied in four intact groups with different textbook backgrounds: university junior students studying *English translation*, and language institute learners studying *Passages2* (grades 7 and 8), *Headway Advanced* (grades 1 and 4*)* and *Iran Language Institute Textbooks* (Advanced 1 and 4). The fourth one was a locally developed series.

4.2. Instruments

Most studies have concentrated on the production of foreign language features or their use in interaction. However, different aspects of pragmatic comprehension have received far less attention. One of the aspects which have received no attention in this regard is the comprehension of speakers' attitude within the framework of speech act realizations. In order to test this aspect, three instruments were used: (a) a listening comprehension test, (b) a language background questionnaire, and (c) a checklist of listening activities.

Listening Test: A listening comprehension test adapted from a speaking and listening course book written by Harmer & Arnold (1981) was used. The original form of this test consisted of linguistic comprehension questions (labeled *General Comprehension* and *Language in Context*) and pragmatic comprehension questions (labeled *Reading between the Lines*). However, the part called language in context, assessing the comprehension of words and phrases used in the listening, was deleted due to practical constraints such as the time allowed to administer the test and the fatigue caused by answering these indirect items. The aim of *General Comprehension* was to test participants' understanding of what had been said, while the aim of *Reading between the Lines* was to assess participant's ability to make inferences about the speakers' attitude.

The listening was an authentic conversation, consisting of three parts in which two, three and five people were talking in the context of a party. Therefore, the listening was structured to include three subsections with an increasing level of difficulty. On the whole, *General Comprehension* consisted of 13 essay-type questions and *Reading between the Lines* contained 13 true/false questions followed by participants' justification for choosing one of the alternatives (i.e. their reasons regarding the appropriate language).

The idea of appropriate language is contextualized in terms of different realizations of three basic speech acts: greetings and introductions, personal interests; and likes and dislikes. The speech act of Greetings and Introduction included greeting people, answering greeting, greeting guests, answering greetings to a guest, introducing people, answering introductions, introducing yourself, and meeting people unexpectedly. Personal Interests encompasses asking about personal interests, examining personal interests, and expressing preference. Finally, the speech act of Likes and Dislikes concerned stating likes, agreeing with likes, disagreeing with likes, stating dislikes, agreeing with dislikes, and agreeing with dislikes

These speech acts were categorized under interpersonal relations (politeness and status; degree of formality and informality), emotional relations (greeting, flattery, etc), argument (relating to the exchange of information and views, information asserted and sought, agreement, disagreement, denial, concessions) based on Wilkin's (1976) list of major functions among others.

With reference to appropriate language and speakers' attitudes, reference was made to Munby's (1978) attitudinal index and communication key and Finocchiaro and Brumfit's (1983) attitudes of speakers and appropriate language. These aspects of pragmatic comprehension were actually operationalized in the questions by the use of adjectives and adverbs: "pleased", "formal", "politely", "interested", "enthusiastically", "reserved", "enthusiasm", "surprised", "embarrassed", "informal", "strongly", "strong", and "tentative". The functions (speech acts) under question were represented in the questions by using the following nouns and verbs: "see", "enquire", "greet", "share", "introduce", "dislike", "enjoy" and "preference".

Background Questionnaire: This questionnaire elicited some information about participants' English background and the language activities they were engaged in. The aim of this elicitation task was to provide a thick description of the sample to interpret the results in terms of the other variables.

Listening-Activity Checklist: This instrument, adapted from Wilcox Peterson (2001), was a listening-activity checklist which was given to the teachers teaching the textbooks to the three groups participating in this study. The aim of this checklist was to shed light on the kind of listening activities the teachers focused on while engaging the students across different proficiency levels and to see whether there was a deliberate focus on the development of pragmatic comprehension.

4.3. Data Collection Procedure

Before administering the listening comprehension task, the linguistic background questionnaire was distributed among participants. Brief explanation in Persian was given to students about each part of this instrument. The participants, managers of the institutes and the teachers were assured that the information would be used and interpreted anonymously.

Afterwards, the listening comprehension tests comprising linguistic and pragmatic comprehension items were given to participants, accompanied with brief instructions on how to fill out the answer sheet. It was particularly emphasized that the subjects need not answer the essay type questions in "GENERAL COMPREHENSION" part completely to have them focus on meaning rather than form. That is to say, a brief phrase would be sufficient. In addition, it was mentioned that the subjects should justify their answer (i.e. true or false) by referring to what they had heard and using linguistic clues (e.g. words) and nonlinguistic clues (e.g. tone of voice) in "READING BETWEEN THE LINES)".

Following this, itwas explained that each major section of the listening comprehension test consists of three subsections (a, b and c). Before playing the tape, the researcher asked the participants to read the instructions and questions. Then, they listened to each part two times and were subsequently given enough time to answer the questions. The same procedure was followed for the second major section and the relevant subsections. The total mark for the first section representing linguistic comprehension and the second section representing pragmatic comprehension were 13 and 42, respectively. The sessions for the administration of the test lasted from 50 minutes to an hour.

At the same time, the checklist of listening activities was given to the teachers teaching at different proficiency levels in the relevant institutes. The items in the checklist were checked by the teachers during the same sessions or later.

4.4. Data Analysis

Results were tabulated by marking each item correct (1 in linguistic comprehension and 1-3 in pragmatic comprehension) for each participant in the groups and entered on to a spread sheet for carrying out statistical analysis (i.e. SPSS). Reliability of the listening comprehension tasks was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha. Based on the 26 items and participants, Alpha was reflecting a sufficient level of internal reliability (0.87).

The first research question focused on the effect of different textbook backgrounds on linguistic comprehension. Linguistic comprehension was operationalized by the total number of correct responses in each group.

Accordingly, the mean scores and standard deviations for the four groups' scores in linguistic comprehension part were determined. In order to determine if the differences in scores were significant, independent samples one-way ANOVA was run.

The second research question asked whether different textbook background affected pragmatic comprehension. Pragmatic comprehension was operationalized by the total number of correct responses in each group. A correct response was given weight in three ways: indication of True/False (1 point), partial justification, i.e. reasoning without making reference to the content (1 point), and complete justification, i.e. reasoning with making reference to the content, (3 points). Therefore, there were four possible marks for each item, ranging from zero to four points. The calculation of mean scores and standard deviations for the four groups was carried out. Independent samples one-way ANOVA was used to determine if the differences in scores were significant.

As for the third research question, Pearson correlations were used to measure the relationships between comprehension of linguistic and pragmatic subparts for the four groups.

5. Results

Effect of different textbook backgrounds on linguistic comprehension

The first research question asked whether the groups with different textbook background performed differently from one another on the linguistic comprehension (LC) sub-task. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the performance of all the four groups:

Table1.Descriptive Statistics for Linguistic Comprehension (LC) scores

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Group A	18	4.5556	2.38185	.561	3.37	5.7400	.00	8.00
Group B	23	5.1739	2.56997	.53588	4.06	6.2853	1.00	9.00
Group C	20	2.1000	1.44732	.32363	1.42	2.7774	.00	6.00
Group D	14	4.7143	2.55489	.68282	3.23	6.1894	1.00	10.00
Total	75	4.1200	2.55195	.29467	3.53	4.7071	.00	10.00

As it is clear in the table, there are apparent differences between means of the four groups ($M_A=4.55$; $M_B=5.17$; $M_C=2.1$, $M_D=4.7$). In fact, ($M_C<M_A<M_D<M_B$) is the hierarchy of difference, which figure 1 vividly shows:
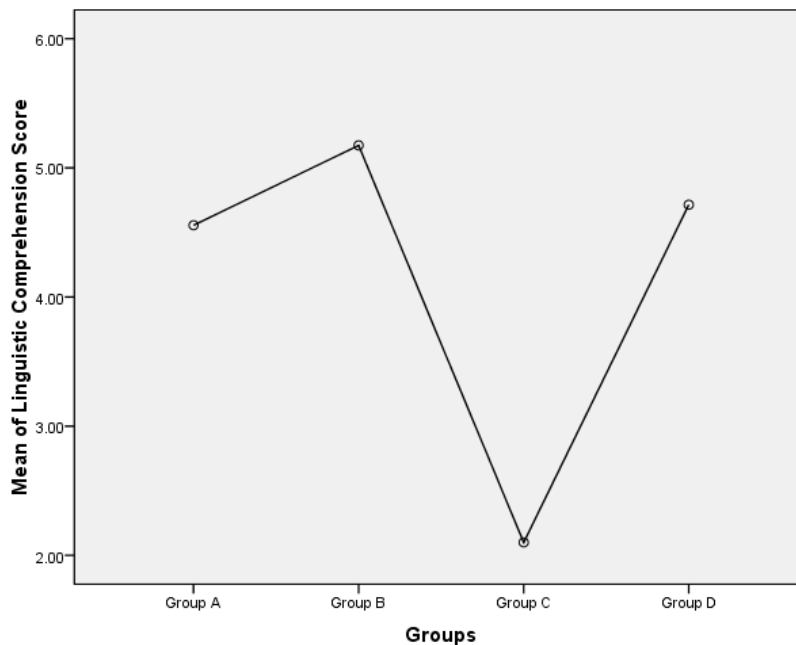

Figure1. Mean of Linguistic Comprehension Scores across Different Groups

However, in order to answer the question, a one-way ANOVA was run to see if such differences among mean scores are statistically significant or not. The results of the used ANOVA are presented in table 2 below

Table2. ANOVA (LinguisticComprehension)

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	115.51	3	38.50	7.461	.000
Within Groups	366.40	71	5.16		
Total	481.92	74			

As it can be observed, the F- value with 3 and 71 degrees of freedom for numerator and denominator, respectively, is 7.461 : F (3,74)= 7.461. Since this value is greater than the critical value for F (3.71) at P<.05 (F_{crit}=2.74) we can reject the first null hypothesis of the study and it is concluded that such a difference between groups is significant, i.e. the four groups with different course book backgrounds performed differently on the LC sub-test.

To locate the place of difference, where groups had outperformed each other, a Scheffe test as a robust post hoc test was calculated. The results of the used Scheffe test can be observed in table 3 below:

Table 3. Scheffe (Linguistic Comprehension Scores)

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Group A	Group B	-.61836	.71490	.862	-2.6656	1.4289
	Group C	2.45556*	.73806	.016	.3419	4.5692
	Group D	-.15873	.80952	.998	-2.4770	2.1595
Group B	Group A	.61836	.71490	.862	-1.4289	2.6656
	Group C	3.07391*	.69456	.001	1.0849	5.0629
	Group D	.45963	.77006	.949	-1.7456	2.6649
Group C	Group A	-2.45556*	.73806	.016	-4.5692	-.3419
	Group B	-3.07391*	.69456	.001	-5.0629	-1.0849
	Group D	-2.61429*	.79161	.017	-4.8812	-.3473
Group D	Group A	.15873	.80952	.998	-2.1595	2.4770
	Group B	-.45963	.77006	.949	-2.6649	1.7456
	Group C	2.61429*	.79161	.017	.3473	4.8812

As the multiple comparisons in these post hoc tests show, the mean differences for groups (B-A, D-A, B-D) are not significant, but the differences for groups (A-C, B-C, D-C) are significant. That is to say, groups A and B did better than group C, and group D out performed group C on LC sub-test. It is worthy of note that homogeneity test for equality of means reveals that the difference in the number of subjects in the four groups did not violate the assumptions of the used tests.

Effect of different textbook backgrounds on pragmatic comprehension

The second research question asked whether groups with different textbook backgrounds performed differently from one another on the Pragmatic Comprehension (PC) sub-task. The descriptive statistics for the performance of all the four groups is presented below:

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Pragmatic Comprehension (PC) Scores

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Group A	18	9.0556	3.33382	.78579	7.3977	10.7134	5.00	16.00
Group B	23	12.3478	4.81105	1.00317	10.2674	14.4283	4.00	23.00
Group C	20	4.8000	3.33404	.74551	3.2396	6.3604	.00	12.00
Group D	14	7.5000	3.63212	.97073	5.4029	9.5971	3.00	16.00
Total	75	8.6400	4.81170	.55561	7.5329	9.7471	.00	23.00

With reference to this table, apparent differences among means of the four groups can be observed (M_A=9.05; M_B=12.34; M_C=4.8; M_D=7.5), which can hierarchically be represented as $M_C < M_D < M_A < M_B$. The visual representation can be observed in figure 3 below:
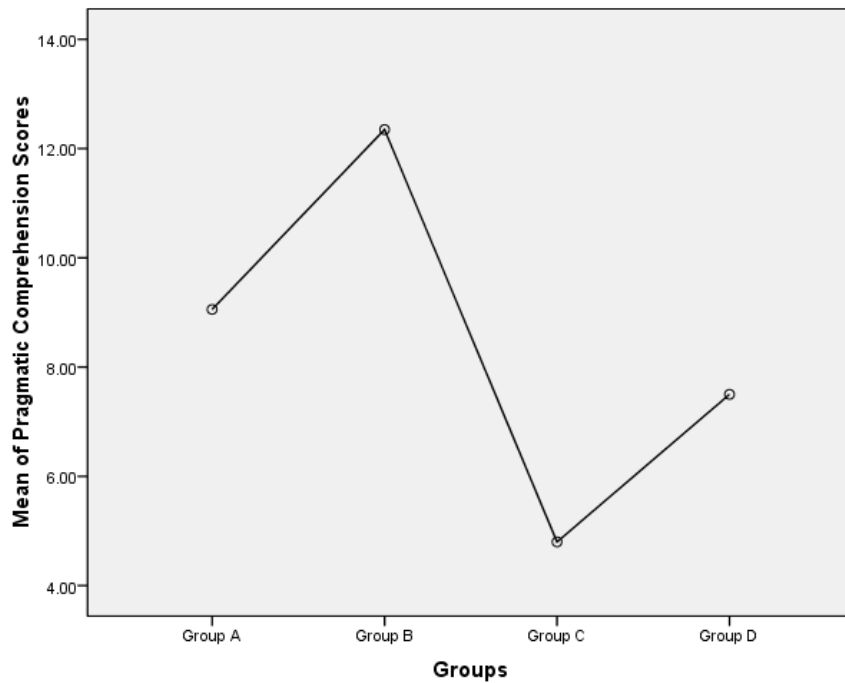
Figure 2. Mean of Pragmatic Comprehension Scores across Different Groups

Following this, one-way ANOVA revealed that the F-value (F (3, 71) =13.847) was greater than the critical value (F_{crit}=2.74) for F (3.71) at P<.05. Having statistically significant differences among mean scores, we can reject the second null hypothesis of the study. Table 5 displays the results of the used ANOVA:

Table 5. ANOVA (Pragmatic Comprehension (PC) Scores)

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Group A	18	9.0556	3.33382	.78579	7.3977	10.7134	5.00	16.00
Group B	23	12.3478	4.81105	1.00317	10.2674	14.4283	4.00	23.00
Group C	20	4.8000	3.33404	.74551	3.2396	6.3604	.00	12.00
Group D	14	7.5000	3.63212	.97073	5.4029	9.5971	3.00	16.00
Total	75	8.6400	4.81170	.55561	7.5329	9.7471	.00	23.00

With reference to the four groups' different performances on the PC sub-test due to their different course book backgrounds, another Scheffe test was run, the results of which are displayed in table 6:

Table 6. Scheffe (Pragmatic Comprehension Scores)

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Group A	Group B	-3.29227	1.22786	.075	-6.8085	.2240
	Group C	4.25556*	1.26764	.015	.6254	7.8857
	Group D	1.55556	1.39037	.741	-2.4261	5.5372
Group B	Group A	3.29227	1.22786	.075	-.2240	6.8085
	Group C	7.54783*	1.19292	.000	4.1316	10.9640
	Group D	4.84783*	1.32260	.006	1.0603	8.6354
Group C	Group A	-4.25556*	1.26764	.015	-7.8857	-.6254
	Group B	-7.54783*	1.19292	.000	-10.9640	-4.1316
	Group D	-2.70000	1.35962	.276	-6.5936	1.1936
Group D	Group A	-1.55556	1.39037	.741	-5.5372	2.4261
	Group B	-4.84783*	1.32260	.006	-8.6354	-1.0603
	Group C	2.70000	1.35962	.276	-1.1936	6.5936

According to this post hoc test, the mean differences for groups (A-B, A-D, C-D) are not significant, while there are significant differences for groups (A-C B-C, B-D).

In other words, group A did better than group C, and group B performed better than groups C and D. Also, the results of homogeneity test indicate that the difference in the number of subjects in the four groups did not violate the assumptions of the used tests.

Relationship between LC and PC

To check any go-togetheredness between the scores of LC and PC, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the whole sample (N=75), the results of which can be seen in table 7 :

Table 7. Relationship between LC and PC for the Whole Group

		VAR00001	VAR00002
VAR00001	Pearson Correlation	1	.497**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	75	75
VAR00002	Pearson Correlation	.497**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	75	75

The obtained value (r =.497) was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) ; however, it was not a strong one. That is to say, it indicated that there was some relationship, but not a powerful and meaningful one. A piece of evidence that supported such a conclusion was the value of r^2 (0.25), indicating that the overlap between the performance of subjects on LC and PC sub-tasks was limited.

To locate the major contribution to this significant relationship across the groups, correlation coefficient was run for each group separately (table 8). The major contributions, according to the results, can be attributed to groups A & B, with significant values of (0.522) and (0.465) at the 0.05 level, respectively. This means that groups C and D did not show a significant relationship between LC and PC sub-tasks (i.e. $r_{group\ c}$ = -0.159 and $r_{group\ D}$ = 0.249). However, the results of coefficient of determination for group A (r^2=0.27) and group B (r^2=0.22) revealed that there were limited overlapping variances between LC and PC subtasks, suggesting that the relationships between these two sub-tasks in the two groups are not statistically meaningful.

Table 8.Relationship between LC and PC across the four groups

Correlations Group A

		PC Scores	LC Scores
PC Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.522[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	18	18
LC Scores	Pearson Correlation	.522[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	18	18

Correlations B

		PC Scores	LC Scores
PC Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.465[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	23	23
LC Scores	Pearson Correlation	.465[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	23	23

Correlations C

		PC Scores	LC Scores
PC Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	-.159
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.502
	N	20	20
LC Scores	Pearson Correlation	-.159	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.502	
	N	20	20

Correlations D

		PC Scores	LC Scores
PC Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.249
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.391
	N	14	14
LC Scores	Pearson Correlation	.249	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.391	
	N	14	14

6. Discussion

In answer to the first question seeking the effect of different textbook backgrounds on linguistic comprehension, ANOVA results showed that there were significant differences among the groups in terms of their performance on LC subtasks.

The subsequent Scheffe test revealed that university junior students enjoying interchange (18 persons) and Headway (8 people) as the textbook backgrounds (group B) and the students having headway as their background (group A) significantly outperformed the students with ILI textbook as their background (group C) and the same was true about group D, consisting of the students with passages as their background, which significantly did better than group C. This may be due to the fact that groups B, and A, with a hierarchical order of increasing means, were involved in more listening activities both inside and outside the class as the evaluation of the textbooks and the results of linguistic background survey show. However, the fact that the mean scores of all the four groups were lower than half of the total score for LC (i.e.13) may indicate that the four textbooks did not provide enough opportunities for the learners to listen to longer challenging authentic texts in which several people spoke with and interrupted each other. This is exactly what is lacking in all the four textbooks, the listening extracts of which are quite short, with little focus on performance factors and paralinguistic features such as interruption, repetition, pauses, interjection and intonation. Also, a glance at the least frequent items in the checklist of listening activities (See Appendix6) shows that they are largely concerned with advanced listening skills like prediction and inference on one hand and paralinguistic features on the other hand.

The second question explored the effect of different textbook backgrounds on pragmatic comprehension. The results of calculated ANOVA showed the existence of significant differences among the groups as far as their performance on PC sub-task were concerned. The post hoc comparison of means through Scheffe indicated that group A with Headway as their textbook background and group B's with both Interchange and Headway as their background significantly outperformed group C having ILI textbook as their background. Also, group B'S performance was significantly better than group D with passages as their background. The same explanation as the one for LC subtask seems to be relevant, i.e. more listening activities. In fact, a more important fact is that the average performance of all the four groups was lower than one third of the total mark on/PC subtask (i.e. the maximum of 12.34 out of 42).

These findings can be in line with those of Vellenga findings (2004), which are the indicative of the fact that textbooks (e.g. Headway, Passages,…) as the center of EFL curriculum and syllabus rarely provide enough information for learners to successfully acquire pragmatic competence. In other words, textbooks do not focus on pragmatic information such as the use of meta language, explicit treatment of speech acts, and meta pragmatic information, including discussions of register, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and usage.

The analysis of the textbooks in the present study show that they include a paucity of explicit metapragmatic information and teacher's manuals rarely supplement adequately. In addition, teacher surveys on the basis of the checklist of listening activities (Appendix6) revealed that the least frequent items (i.e. 10 & 39) are the ones which are directly related to the aspects of PC: Speaker's attitudes, appropriate language, and speech acts.

The third question focused on whether there is any relationship between linguistic and pragmatic comprehension. The results of Pearson correlations run for each group indicated that there were low correlations for groups C (ILI textbook) and group D (Passages) between the LC and PC sub-tasks, while there were significant go-togetheredness for groups A (Head way) and B (Interchange and Headway). According to the information gathered on the basis of linguistic background, group A and B were engaged in language- related activities, exposure to English and listening activities (both inside and outside the class) more than the other two groups in terms of the time spent and the variety of activities done.

Although the results of the general correlation coefficient for the whole sample suggest that there is significant relationship between LC and PC, the 25% overlap (on the basis of r^2=0.25) is indicative of lack of meaningful relationship between these two kinds of abilities. These results support L_2 English (Hoffman- Hicks, 1992) and first language English (Leinonen, et al, 2003) research showing that linguistic competence is distinct from pragmatic competence.

These findings point out several implications for language teachers. Firstly, the supported distinction between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence means that L_2 English learners can benefit from targeted focus on pragmatic comprehension.

This can be done by using authentic language samples to provide practice with how native English speakers express themselves pragmatically, not just linguistically. A dual focus on pragmatic and linguistic meaning will provide learners with a fuller picture of English language use.

Secondly, as Schmidt (2001) mentions, for input to be acquisitionally relevant, it has to be noticed or detected under attention. Accordingly, teachers should create an atmosphere and devise some activities so that learners attend the action that is being implemented, its immediate interactional or textual context and the dimensions of situational context that are indexed by linguistic and pragmatic choices. This can be done by focusing on some consciousness- raising activities related to appropriate language and speaker's attitudes. This is actually in line with Vygotskyan ZPD, on the basis of which the effectiveness of instructional arrangements (teaching/ learning processes and materials) can be evaluated to see whether they afford the type and amount of assistance necessary for the students to notice or produce the targeted pragmatic objects.

Finally, within the framework of TBT, the role of pragmatic meaning as a critical factor in accuracy of utterance and speech comprehension should be highlighted. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the notion of task complexity, with attendant implications for task-based teaching and testing.

7. Limitation of the Study and Implications for Future Studies

The present study adopted an innovative instrument to measure one of the aspects of pragmatic comprehension which has not received attention: the comprehension of appropriate language and speaker's attitudes, and partially confirmed the previous findings for L_2/FL English. Future research is needed over different participant populations to confirm the generalizability of the findings. The grouping of the participants in advanced levels in their institutes and universities may not be in accordance with standard definitions of advanced proficiency level. Therefore, a well-defined measure as an indicator of proficiency should be developed and administered to operationally define the proficiency level of the sample.

Brown (2001), reviewing the types of instruments in measuring pragmatics and discussing the pros and cons of the elicitation tasks, enumerates the written discourse completion tasks, multiple-choice discourse completion tasks, oral discourse completion tasks and role-play self-assessment (See Appendix7) Therefore, these tasks can be implemented to further investigate this rarely investigated aspect of pragmatic comprehension.

The focus of this study was the realizations of three speech acts and some of speaker's attitudes on the basis of attitudinal index. Accordingly, future research can concentrate on other speech acts, attitudes and proficiency levels. One of the shortcomings of the study was the small n-size of one of the groups; the results of this study should be interpreted keeping this in mind. It is also worthy of note that future studies should concentrate on standardizing test task, administration and scoring.

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